



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 27, 2005

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**IN ADVANCE OF PROM AND GRADUATION SEASON
ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE CARTER
WELCOMES BRANDON SILVERIA
TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO “MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE” AND
TO PREVENT DRUNK DRIVING AND UNDERAGE DRINKING**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — Attorney General Steve Carter and The Century Council partnered today to bring a life-saving lesson about the dangers of drunk driving and underage drinking to students at New Beginnings High School. The Century Council is a national not-for-profit organization funded by distillers and is dedicated to fighting drunk driving and underage drinking. The presentation featured Brandon Silveria, a young man who was involved in an alcohol-related crash at age 17 just before his high school prom, and his father Tony. They spoke to students about the importance of “making the right choice” about alcohol – and if students are under the age of 21 – the only responsible decision is not to drink.

“We must all do more to save lives in our area,” said Attorney General Carter. “Last year (2003) 262 people were killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes in Indiana, including 48 alcohol-related deaths among youth under the age of 21. One death is one too many. We must do more to keep the teens of Indiana safe and alcohol-free. I am so proud to have Brandon and Tony Silveria with us today to communicate their life-saving message to young drivers in Indianapolis.”

“The good news is that over the past 20 years, the number of underage drinkers has decreased. For example, underage drinking among high school seniors has declined 29% proportionally from 70% in 1982 to 50% in 2001, according to government surveys. I’m pleased Attorney General Carter invited us to give a presentation today,” said Pam Beer of The Century Council. “During our visit, we hope to raise awareness about this serious problem, and by doing so, save lives in Indiana.”

During the presentation, Brandon Silveria told students his wrenching story of how as a high school student he had everything a teenager could want—a job, girlfriend and plans for the future—until he had a few drinks at a party and chose to drive home. After falling asleep at the wheel, crossing the centerline and crashing into a tree, he was left in a coma for three months and spent several years in rehabilitation. Silveria was so badly injured that basic motor functions such as walking, talking and swallowing had to be re-learned. He has permanent brain injury and suffers from dangerous seizures. Brandon’s presentations continue to receive standing ovations from students across the country.

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“What you become depends on the choices that you make,” said Brandon Silveria. “When I was seventeen, I had a job and a girlfriend. Because of my crash, I lost both of them. My hope is that by sharing my experiences with other young people, I can prevent others from being hurt or killed.”

Through educational efforts such as the Silveria lecture and video program, The Century Council educates students across the country about the hazards of underage drinking and driving. Since Brandon and his father Tony have become spokespeople for The Century Council, they have addressed well over one million high school students nationwide and have been featured on such television programs as “Rescue 911,” NBC’s “Today,” and “Leeza.”

To request a free copy of “Brandon Tells His Story” or for more information on the Silveria program call (800) 431-4499. The 30-minute video, which won an award from the American Medical Association, is accompanied by supporting curriculum materials and can be used with large or small groups of teens.

The Century Council is a national, not-for-profit organization dedicated to fighting drunk driving and underage drinking. Founded in 1991, The Council is funded by distillers. For more information on The Council and its mission, please log onto www.centurycouncil.org.

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